

FORM B – BUILDING

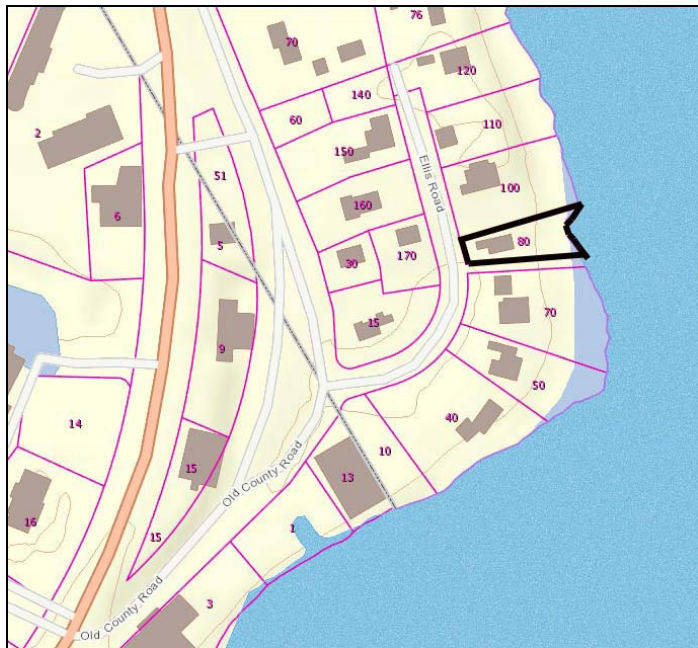
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



Photo courtesy of Town of Eastham Assessor.

Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Larson Fisher Associates with Kathryn Grover

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: March 2013

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

22-014

ORLEANS

EAS.592

Town/City: Eastham

Place: South Eastham

Address: 80 Ellis Road

Historic Name: Thelma E. Johnson House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: 1928-30

Source: deeds, tax records

Style/Form: Cape Cod vernacular

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete block

Wall/Trim: wood shingles/wood

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*): left side ell with deck atop (date unknown) & hipped roof front pavilion (date unknown)

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: .11 acre

Setting: This house is located east of Ellis Road and has water frontage on Town Cove, an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean. It is within a single family residential subdivision, and is surrounded by other single family dwellings. A public right-of-way to the waterfront borders the south property line.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

80 ELLIS ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

This one-story, wood frame house has retained much of its original historic character. It has a hipped roof with exposed rafter ends and asphalt shingle cladding. There is an interior brick chimney. The exposed foundation of concrete block is due to a raised basement that allows for at-grade access on the water (east) side and which has an overhead vehicle door—presumably to accommodate a boat. The dwelling is sided with weathered wood shingles. At some point a front pavilion with a hipped roof slightly lower than the main roof was added, date unknown.¹ The front entrance is into the right side of this addition. Another small addition appears to have been constructed on the left (north) side of the house, having a balcony/deck on its roof. (See aerial photo below.) It appears to retain its original six-over-one double hung windows along with the authentic wood window blinds.. The small lot has a number of mature trees and shrubs. A small retaining wall is located between the house and the water's edge. A white painted wood picket fence separates the yard from the public walkway to the Beach that runs along the south side of the property.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The house at 80 Ellis Road is contained on what was, in 1928, lot 6 of a twenty-seven-lot subdivision platted by Gilbert E. Ellis of Brewster in April 1925. Ellis was a farmer, realtor, and owner of a shore net and pound fishery and was born in Brewster in 1867; his father, Thaddeus, was a fisherman, and his mother, Caroline J. Norway, was born in Spain. Ellis began his career as a store clerk when he was fourteen, if not younger. At the time of his marriage in 1887 he worked as a salesman. The 1900 census shows Ellis as a fisherman; the 1910 census shows him more specifically as a weir fisherman. He was among a declining number of Cape fishermen in what was termed the "shore net and pound fishery," which used large nets attached to a wood framework extending from the shore outward to catch such inshore schooling fish as herring and menhaden; these were sold as bait to the offshore fishing industry, and other species caught in the nets were sold to urban fresh-fish markets after rail lines reached the Cape in the 1870s. In 1914 the town of Brewster granted Ellis a permit to build six fish pounds in its coastal waters, and by 1920 Ellis was one of three Brewster men who ran a pound fishery; he employed seven men, among the most of any of the 43 pound fisheries in the state, and caught \$3100 of fish.²

Once a prosperous industry on Cape Cod, the pound fishery began to decline after World War I, and by 1920 Ellis was probably preparing to leave the industry. The 1920 census shows him as a farmer, and by 1929 he is listed as a realtor. In September 1924 he bought four acres in South Eastham bordered mostly by the state highway, Town Cove, and what was, for a brief time, a canal that connected Town Cove to the river at Boat Meadow on Cape Cod Bay, a distance of less than a mile.³ Ellis acquired the tract from New York City insurance broker Frederick Dorflinger Suydam, whose father, William Farrington Suydam, was an affluent Pennsylvania silk manufacturer and a summer resident of Orleans. The tract was part of the far larger holdings of Captain Heman Smith and his wife Louisiana Crosby Smith, who lived at 70 Old State Highway (EAS.43). In 1881, five years after the Smiths were lost at sea in the wreck of the bark *Burnside*, their children sold the property to their sibling Francis M. Smith (1852-1922), who in 1898 sold it to Somerville carpenter George S. Newcomb, an Orleans native. In 1913 Newcomb's son, George E. Newcomb, sold the four-acre tract to Albert F. Sherman, superintendent of the quarantine station on Gallup's Island in Boston Harbor, and in 1916 Sherman and his wife sold it to Frederick Suydam's mother, Mary Elizabeth Dorflinger Suydam.⁴

By January 1926 Ellis had built a house—what is now 76 Old State Highway—on the northernmost 1.5 acres of the tract, and in March 1928 he made the first sale of a lot in his new subdivision, lot 6, to Thelma E. Johnson of Newton with the proviso that "only one house or cottage shall be built on a lot and at least ten feet from the boundary line," standard language in Ellis's deeds for undeveloped lots.⁵ Johnson, then a twenty-five-year-old secretary, was the daughter of Swedish immigrant David Carl Johnson, an engineer, and his wife Amanda Olson Johnson. David Johnson immigrated to the United States in 1886, and by 1910 he was living with his wife and eight children in Newton. By 1930 Thelma was still living in her parents' household and working as a telephone office clerk; her adult sisters Mildred, Helen, and Dorothy also still lived at home.

Eastham tax records for 1937 show Thelma Johnson as owner of a cottage valued at \$1200, a garage valued at \$150, and a half-acre lot. She alone, and later with her father, owned 80 Ellis Road until 1945. Thelma had by then married telephone

¹ Town of Eastham building department records are missing for this property but visual inspection of the concrete block foundation under the front pavilion indicates it is more recent than that of the main house.

² On the pound fishery, see Matthew McKenzie, *Clearing the Coastline: The Nineteenth-Century Ecological & Cultural Transformation of Cape Cod* (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 2010), especially 11-12, 33, 91, 96, 138-39, 164, 172; *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Harbor and Land Commissioners For the Year 1914* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1915), 100; and "Returns from the Shore Net and Pound Fisheries for the Year 1920," *Annual Report of the Division of Fisheries and Game for the Year Ending November 30, 1920* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1921), 151-58.

³ Alice A. Lowe, comp., *Nauset on Cape Cod: A History of Eastham*, 4th ed. (Eastham, MA: Eastham Historical Society, 1968), 35-36, states that the canal was dug in 1804 through "land following very nearly the boundary line between the towns of Eastham and Orleans" and became known as "Jeremiah's Gutter" where it crossed the property of Jeremiah Smith. A shallow channel, the canal filled quickly, and in 1817 the Eastham and Orleans Canal Proprietors built a wider one, but it was abandoned at some unstated later date.

⁴ William H. Smith, Boston; Mary M. Smith and Nellie J. Smith, all formerly of Eastham, to Francis M. Smith, 1 November 1881, Barnstable County Registry of Deeds (BCD) 148:366; Francis M. Smith, Somerville, to George S. Newcomb, 5 November 1898, BCD 296:12; George S. Newcomb to George E. Newcomb, 28 May 1909, BCD 296:105; George E. Newcomb to Albert F. Sherman, Boston, 6 January 1913, BCD 321:21; Albert F. and Emma L. Sherman to Mary E. Suydam, Montclair NJ, 15 August 1916, BCD 345:440; Frederick D. Suydam, NYC, to Gilbert E. Ellis, East Brewster, 4 September 1924, BCD 409:454.

⁵ Gilbert E. Ellis to Thelma E. Johnson, Newton, 17 March 1928, BCD 453:520.

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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

EAS.592

engineer Algot Johnson and was living in Gloucester with him and their two children. Early in 1945 they sold the property to Andrew V. Ceselski, an accountant for New England Bakery in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Born in 1904, Ceselski lived in Providence with his wife Dorothea and daughter Judith, a dancer. Tax records for 1947 show him as owning the half-acre lot 6 and its cottage, valued at \$3000; he had by then also acquired the two lots abutting lot 6 on the south, which had a cottage and garage as well. Ceselski owned 80 Ellis Road until 1961, by which time he had moved to California. He sold the property to Frederick W. and Eleanor K. Turner of Glen Rock, New Jersey. The Turners owned 80 Ellis Road until 1993, when the widowed Eleanor Turner sold it to current owners Joseph, Esther, and Barbara Giacomuzzi of East Levittown, Pennsylvania.⁶

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MAPS

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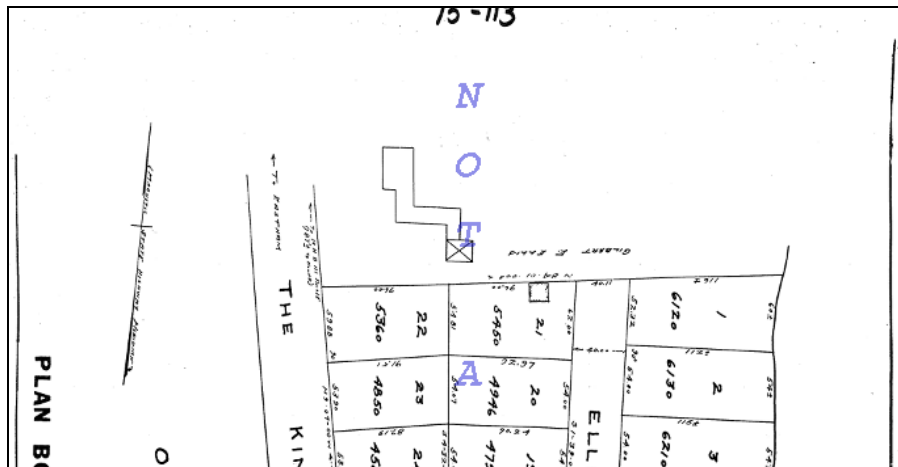
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PHOTOGRAPHS & SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES (credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2012-2013 unless otherwise noted)



View from southwest.

⁶ David C. Johnson, Newton; Thelma E. Johnson, Gloucester, to Andrew V. Cecelski, 10 January 1945, BCD 623:575; Andrew V. Cecelski, formerly Providence RI now Ventura CA, to Frederick W. and Eleanor K. Turner, Glen Rock, NJ, 21 September 1961, BCD 1134:334; Eleanor K. Turner, Gladwyne PA, to Joseph Giacomuzzi, Esther M. Giacomuzzi, and Barbara Giacomuzzi, East Levittown PA, 17 September 1993, BCD 8785:73.

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	EAS.592
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The Ellis subdivision plan of 1925 (BCP 15:113): 80 Ellis Road is Lot 6.



Aerial view from east (courtesy Bing Maps).